

Pollution Prevention (P2), or source reduction, is the core environmental ethic of our society.

BISON WORKING TO SAVE THE PRAIRIE

The managers of **Bison Inc.** (a division of IMSCORP) of Lincoln recently realized that they needed better ways to manage and reduce waste. Barrels located at various sites around the plant made collecting waste oil convenient, but they were not attractive nor necessarily safe. Further, wood pallets and empty barrels created waste disposal costs and other problems.

After meeting with representatives of the LLCHD Technical Assistance Program (TAP), the managers at Bison made minor but significant changes. One change was to create a centralized oil storage area in each department. This arrangement allows for safe and convenient collection of used oil for recycling. Steel barrels are cut open and cleaned before being stored and recycled.

Stewart Pallet Company sells wood pallets to Bison, but also agreed to reuse and recycle damaged pallets. Not only does this reuse eliminate a major landfill waste, it saved the company between \$4800 and \$12,000 per year in disposal costs.

The P2 Corner

Fluorescent Light Bulbs:

Dangerous and Costly

—Beth Mann

Fluorescent light bulbs pose a serious risk to human health and the environment because they contain mercury. If the bulb should break, mercury is released into the environment.



Standard Fluorescent Tubes are Banned from the Lincoln Landfill

Standard fluorescent tubes contain enough mercury to pose health hazards to humans and animals. *Businesses are not allowed to dispose of these tubes in the Lincoln Landfill.* Recycling is the best option for disposing of products containing mercury. ***For a list of mercury waste recyclers in Lincoln and Lancaster County call 441-6238 or 441-6235.***

Besides recycling, you should buy low-mercury fluorescent tubes. These tubes contain 40% to 50% less mercury than standard tubes. Prices of low-mercury tubes are approximately the same as standard tubes. ***For a list of vendors of or for more information about low-mercury tubes call 441-6238 or 441-6235.***



Mercury is a unique metal that exists as a liquid at room temperature and is widely used in hundreds of industrial and household applications. A wide range of products that are used daily contain mercury: certain batteries (i.e., button cells and 9-volt), fluorescent lamp tubes, thermometers, thermostats, electrical switches, adhesives, fertilizers, and pesticides. Old paint, floor waxes and polishes, and wood preservatives might also contain mercury. Despite its usefulness, mercury is highly toxic.

Why is mercury dangerous?

Mercury is a neurotoxin that affects the central nervous system and can cause brain damage in young children and fetuses. Mercury stays in the environment for a long period of time and will remain a threat long after it is released. When an animal eats another animal or plant that was exposed to mercury, the second animal is also exposed to mercury. This process is repeated up the food chain in a process called *bioaccumulation*. Bioaccumulation is most common in aquatic food chains. Therefore, eating fish from mercury contaminated water is hazardous to birds, animals, and humans.

When exposed to air, mercury vaporizes and can then be breathed in. In addition, if people handle mercury then put their hands in their mouths or handle food, mercury can enter the body through the digestive system. Most mercury exposures happen after a mercury spill. A spill occurs when anything that contains mercury (such as a thermometer or a fluorescent light bulb) is broken. ***(If a spill occurs contact the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8040 or after hours at 441-8000 before you try to clean it up.)***

Because they contain less mercury than standard fluorescent bulbs, quantities of less than 43 pounds a month of low-mercury fluorescent light tubes may be placed in the Lincoln Landfill without a permit. (Recycling is still the best option.) Because they contain some mercury, quantities over 43 pounds a month of low-mercury fluorescent light tubes cannot be discarded without a Special Waste Disposal Permit. *They must remain unbroken and display the low-mercury logo at the end of the tubes.* Recycling costs are typically 50 to 75 cents for standard tubes. ***Notify the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-6238 if you plan to dispose of low-mercury tubes.***

Hazardous Waste Reduction and Recycling Fair

Oct. 1, 1999

Southeast Community College 8800 "O" St, Lincoln
8:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Talk to vendors about available hazardous waste reduction and recycling opportunities. Attend demonstrations on proven methods that reduce waste at the source. ***Free event open to businesses and the public.***

What's new in the Special Waste Program?

—BETH MANN

There have been several changes in the Special Waste Program. **Ron Eriksen**, Environmental Engineer II, has been hired to coordinate the program. **Beth Mann** has been hired to provide on-site business technical assistance. Ron comes to us from the Corps of Engineers where he did environmental and hazardous waste management for the last eight years. Beth has a great amount of experience working with small businesses on waste management options, pollution prevention, and public advocacy issues. You can contact Ron at 441-6238 or Beth at 441-6235 with any questions you may have about the Special Waste Program.



A second change includes modifications to permit applications and inventory forms. These changes are part of an overall review and revision of the Special Waste Program to reduce the regulatory burdens placed on businesses. Proposed changes to the Special Waste Program include plans to:

- ❖ Revise ordinances that pertain to special waste types, quantities, and permit fees;
- ❖ Redefine Special Waste types;
- ❖ Separate the inventory process from the permit application process;
- ❖ Offer businesses more educational opportunities;
- ❖ Make the permit renewal process easier;
- ❖ Implement a one-day turn around time frame on permit reviews; and
- ❖ Develop a new data base system to help streamline the permit process.

We also intend to improve communication between businesses and the Special Waste Program. From time to time business might receive questionnaires and surveys related



to the Special Waste Program. The responses to these materials will guide us in redesigning the program. If your business receives a questionnaire or survey, the Special Waste Staff needs your response to help us serve you better.

One thing that has *not* changed is that the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) is available to all businesses in Lincoln and Lancaster County. This program is a nonregulatory approach that can help businesses prevent or minimize the generation of hazardous and/or special waste, understand their obligation under environmental laws, or find alternative ways to manage wastes. ***For confidential TAP help call 441-6235 or 441-6272.***

NATIONAL P2 WEEK

September 20–26, 1999, is National P2 Week. A planning committee has put together an exciting series of events for the week. These include tours of local companies such as Carol Wright, Molex, and Duncan Aviation to learn more about their recycling and waste reduction efforts. These tours will be conducted the morning of September 21.

On Thursday, September 23, there will be a combined meeting of INFORM and NICE at the Lancaster County Extension office. Local businesses will share their waste reduction success stories at this meeting. A luncheon will follow. For more information about the tours and the meetings contact Robin DaHarsh (436-4275), Carrie Hakenkamp (472-0888), or John Hetcko (421-4505).

Other events will be planned and announced to educate the public and businesses about environmental issues and to promote waste reduction around the city. The planning committee consists of representatives from Aliant (Alltel), Square D, Keep Nebraska Beautiful, UNL, WasteCap, LLCHD, NDEQ, and the Nebraska Business Development Center.

National P2 Week began in 1992 in California to acknowledge businesses that had reduced wastes and protected the environment. In 1995, the event became national. Communitywide events celebrate business successes, promote waste reduction practices, and encourage everyone to become more informed about environmental issues and how to protect the environment.

For more information, contact Phil Rooney (441-8644).

<http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/health/envIRON/pollu/>

The Ethic is published quarterly by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department and is distributed to Special Waste Permit holders and other businesses in Lincoln and Lancaster County.

For more information or for P2 technical assistance, call 441-8040.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department
3140 "N" Street
Lincoln, NE 68510-1514

